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**FLATTENED DECORATIVE BAG OR SLEEVE HAVING GUSSETS CONVERTIBLE
TO A DECORATIVE BAG FOR HOLDING A BASKET AND METHODS**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001.] The present patent application is a continuation application of U.S. Serial No. 10/226,740, filed on August 15, 2002, abandoned, which is a continuation of U.S. Serial No. 09/638,584, filed August 15, 2000, entitled "FLATTENED DECORATIVE BAG OR SLEEVE HAVING GUSSETS CONVERTIBLE TO A DECORATIVE BAG FOR HOLDING A BASKET AND METHODS", the entire content of which is hereby expressly incorporated herein by reference, which is a continuation of abandoned U.S. Serial No. 09/092,331, filed on June 5, 1998, entitled "FLATTENED DECORATIVE BAG OR SLEEVE HAVING GUSSETS CONVERTIBLE TO A DECORATIVE BAG FOR HOLDING A BASKET AND METHODS" the entire content of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

**STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR
DEVELOPMENT**

[0002.] Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003.] Field of the Invention

[0004.] This invention relates to flattened bags or sleeves for containing baskets, and particularly, flattened bags or sleeves having gussets used to contain baskets, and methods of making and using same.

Description of Related Art Including Information Disclosed Under
37 CFR § 1.97 and 37 CFR § 1.98

[0005.] Sheets of material have been formed into bags and decorative covers for various items. Such bags often are folded for easy shipment and storage.

[0006.] Usually, however, the item placed in such a bag must be sized to fit the bag. The bag, that is, has not been formed to conform to the shape of the item placed within it. Further, when a decorative cover has been formed to conform to an item, the decorative cover often cannot be folded and flattened so that the cover can be easily shipped and stored.

[0007.] The present invention contemplates bags formed from sheets of material and sleeves, which conform to the shape of an object placed within the bag, in this instance, a basket. Further, many of the bags disclosed herein have gussets, either in the side of the bag, the bottom of the bag, or both, which permit the bag to conform to the shape of the object it contains. Such gussets permit the present bag to expand and contract to

closely follow the contours of the object placed within the bag. In this way, the bag closely follows the overall shape and contours of the outer surface of the object, such as a basket, placed within the bag. Further, such gussets permit the bag to be folded into a shape which makes shipping and/or storage easy, and conserving of space. The gussets also permit the bag, even if of an unusual shape when opened and expanded to receive an object, to be folded and flattened into a smaller and/or more symmetrical shape, and which again enhances ease of shipping and/or storage.

[0008.] It is an objective of the present invention to provide a bag having gussets in the sides and/or bottom of the bag. It is a goal of this invention that the gussets in the bag permit the bag to be folded and flattened for storage and/or shipment. It is a further objective of the present invention to have a bag which expands when opened, forming an object retaining space. It is a further goal of this invention that the bag conforms closely to the overall shape and contours of the outer surface of an object placed within the object retaining space when the bag is opened. It is yet a further objective of the present invention that the bag conforms to the contours of the object placed within the bag when the bag is closed and/or sealed about the object.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009.] A flattened decorative bag for containing a basket is disclosed. The decorative bag has an upper end, a closed lower end, an outer surface, a plurality of gussets disposed between the upper end and the closed lower end, and an opening in the upper end. When the bag is placed in an opened condition, the opening is sized to receive

a basket and the plurality of gussets expand to form a basket retaining space. The plurality of gussets expand to permit a basket to be received and retained in the basket retaining space. When a basket is disposed in the basket retaining space, the bag expands and contracts via the plurality of gussets and conforms to contours and an overall shape of an outer surface of the basket.

[0010.] Another embodiment of a flattened decorative bag for containing a basket is also disclosed. A basket having an outer surface is provided. The decorative bag has an upper end, a closed lower end, an outer surface, a plurality of gussets disposed between the upper end and the closed lower end, and an opening in the upper end. When the bag is placed in an opened condition, the opening is sized to receive a basket and the plurality of gussets expand to form a basket retaining space. The plurality of gussets expand to permit a basket to be received and retained in the basket retaining space. The basket is disposed in the basket retaining space, and the bag expands and contracts via the plurality of gussets, the bag conforming to contours and an overall shape of the outer surface of the basket.

[0011.] A flattened decorative bag assembly for containing a basket is disclosed. The decorative bag has an upper end, a closed lower end, and has at least one gusset disposed in the closed lower end, an outer surface and an opening in the upper end. When the bag is placed in an opened condition, the opening is sized to receive a basket and at least one gusset expands to form a basket retaining space. The gusset expands to permit a basket to be received and retained in the basket retaining space. When a basket is disposed in the basket retaining space, the bag expands and contracts via the

gusset and conforms to contours of a lower end of the basket. An alternative flattened decorative bag assembly for containing a basket is also disclosed. A basket is utilized which has a lower end and an outer surface. A decorative bag is used, which has an upper end, a closed lower end having at least one gusset disposed in the closed lower end, an outer surface and an opening in the upper end. When the bag is placed in an opened condition, the opening is sized to receive a basket and at least one gusset expands to form a basket retaining space. The gusset expands to permit a basket to be received and retained in the basket retaining space. The bag is disposed in the basket retaining space, and the bag expands and contracts via the gusset, the bag conforming to the contours and an overall shape of the outer surface of the lower end of the basket.

[0012.] A method for covering a basket is disclosed. A basket having an outer periphery is provided. A flattened decorative bag is also provided. The flattened decorative bag has an upper end, a closed lower end, an outer surface, a plurality of gussets disposed between the upper end and the closed lower end, and an opening in the upper end. The bag is opened such that the opening is sized to receive the basket. The bag is expanded via the plurality of gussets to both form a basket retaining space and permit the basket to be disposed within and retained in the basket retaining space. The basket is disposed in the basket retaining space, the bag expanding and contacting via the plurality of gussets, the bag conforming to contours and an overall shape of the outer surface of the basket.

[0013.] Another method for covering a basket is disclosed. A basket having a lower end and an outer surface is provided. A flattened decorative bag is provided. The

flattened decorative bag has an upper end, a closed lower end having at least one gusset disposed in the closed lower end, an outer surface and an opening in the upper end. The bag is opened such that the opening is sized to receive the basket. The gusset is expanded to both form a basket retaining space and permit the basket to be disposed within and retained in the basket retaining space. The basket is disposed in the basket retaining space, the bag expanding and contacting via the gusset and conforming to contours of the outer surface of the lower end of the basket.

[0014.] The flattened decorative bag may further comprise a bonding material. The bonding material may comprise an adhesive bonding material, or, alternatively, a cohesive bonding material.

[0015.] The flattened decorative bag is constructed from a sheet of material selected from the group consisting of paper, cellophane, foil, plastic film, metallized film, fabric, fiber, burlap, and any combination thereof. The flattened decorative bag has characteristics selected from the group consisting of decorations, colorings, coatings, embossings, flockings, metallic finishes, pearlescent finishes, translucent finishes, transparent finishes, iridescent finishes, neon finishes, holographic finishes, holographic designs, opaque finishes, clear finishes, and any combination thereof. The flattened decorative bag is constructed from a sheet of material having a thickness in a range of about 0.5 mils to about 10 mils. Alternatively, the flattened decorative bag is constructed from a sheet of material having a thickness in a range of about 1.0 mils to about 8 mils. In a further alternative, the flattened decorative bag is constructed from a sheet of material having a thickness in a range of about 1.0 mils to about 5 mils. When the flattened decorative bag

is opened and a basket is placed therein, the bag may be closed about a handle of the basket. Alternatively, when the flattened decorative bag is opened and a basket is placed therein, the bag may be closed about the basket via a multi-loop bow. In another alternative, when the flattened decorative bag is opened and a basket is placed therein, the bag may be closed above the level of a handle on the basket.

[0016.] The flattened decorative bag may comprise a plurality of side gussets. When the flattened decorative bag has a plurality of side gussets, the side gussets may comprise an excess of material comprising pleats. The flattened decorative bag may comprise at least one gusset in the closed lower end of the bag. When the flattened decorative bag has at least one gusset in the lower end, the gusset may comprise an excess of material comprising pleats.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017.] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a first sheet of material with one end turned up for illustration purposes only, constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0018.] Figure 2 is a perspective view of a second sheet of material with one end turned up for illustration purposes only, constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0019.] Figure 3 is a perspective view of the first and second sheets of material connected together to form a bag of tubular shape, and having a plurality of slits formed in the lower end of the bag.

[0020.] Figure 4 is a bottom plan view of the lower end of the bag, showing the first flap, the second flap, the third flap and the fourth flap extended a distance from the bag.

[0021.] Figure 5 is a bottom plan view of the bag of Figure 4, but showing the first and third flaps connected together.

[0022.] Figure 6 is a bottom plan view of the bag of Figures 4-5, but showing all flaps connected together, thereby forming a closed lower end in the bag.

[0023.] Figure 7 is a perspective view of the bag, showing the bag in an opened, but not expanded, position.

[0024.] Figure 8 is a side plan view of the bag, showing the bag in a flattened position.

[0025.] Figure 9 is a side plan view of another side of the bag, showing the bag in the flattened position, and showing schematically a plurality of gussets in the side and the gusset in the bottom of the bag.

[0026.] Figure 10 is a perspective view of the bag of Figures 6-9, showing the bag in a closed position, the bag having both a plurality of side gussets and a bottom gusset.

[0027.] Figure 11 is a perspective view of a basket, schematically illustrating a basket having a handle.

[0028.] Figure 12 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 9, but showing the bag in an opened position and the insertion of a basket into the bag.

[0029.] Figure 13 is a perspective view of the bag of Figures 9 and 12, but showing the basket disposed into the retaining space, and showing the bag via the plurality of gussets expanding to conform to the contours of the outer surface of the basket.

[0030.] Figure 14 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 13, but showing the bag closed above the level of the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket.

[0031.] Figure 15 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 13, but showing a closure of the bag above the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket.

[0032.] Figure 16 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 13, but showing an alternative closure of the bag about the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket.

[0033.] Figure 17 is a perspective view of another first sheet of material with one end turned up for illustration purposes only, constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0034.] Figure 18 is a perspective view of another second sheet of material with one end turned up for illustration purposes only, constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0035.] Figure 19 is a perspective view of the first and second sheets of material of Figures 17-18 connected together to form a bag of somewhat tubular shape, and having a plurality of slits formed in the lower end of the tube.

[0036.] Figure 20 is a bottom plan view of the lower end of the bag, showing the first flap, the second flap, the third flap and the fourth flap extended a distance from the bag.

[0037.] Figure 21 is a bottom plan view of the bag of Figure 20, but showing the first and third flaps connected together.

[0038.] Figure 22 is a bottom plan view of the bag of Figures 20-21, but showing all flaps connected together, thereby forming a closed lower end in the bag.

[0039.] Figure 23 is a perspective view of the bag, showing the bag in a partially flattened position, the bag having a plurality of side gussets but no bottom gusset.

[0040.] Figure 24 is a perspective view of an alternative bag of Figures 17-22, but showing the bag in a partially flattened position, the bag having no side gussets but having a bottom gusset.

[0041.] Figure 25 is a side elevational view of yet another alternative bag, showing a bag similar to the bag of Figure 24 but having no bottom gusset, the bag having the lower end folded over, the bag being in a flattened position.

[0042.] Figure 26 is a perspective view of still yet another alternative bag, showing the bag having both a plurality of side gussets and a bottom gusset, the bag being in a folded, partially opened position.

[0043.] Figure 27 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 26, showing the bag in a position where the bag was opened and a basket was disposed therein, the bag retaining the basket in the retaining space, the bag being closed above the level of the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket contained therein.

[0044.] Figure 28 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 26, showing the bag in a position where the bag was opened and a basket was disposed therein, the bag retaining the basket in the retaining space, the bag being closed about and over the handle of the

basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket contained therein.

[0045.] Figure 29 is a perspective view of the bag formed from a sleeve, showing the bag in a partially flattened position, the bag having a plurality of side gussets having an excess of material, but no bottom gusset.

[0046.] Figure 30 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 29, showing the bag in a partially opened position, the bag having a plurality of side gussets having an excess of material expanding outward to both accept a basket and form a retaining space for a basket.

[0047.] Figure 31 is a perspective view of the bag of Figures 29-30, showing the bag in a position where the bag was opened and a basket was disposed therein, the bag retaining the basket in the retaining space, the bag being closed about and over the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket contained therein.

[0048.] Figure 32 is a bottom plan view of the bag of Figures 29-31, the bag in a flattened position, but having a bottom gusset having an excess of material formed in the bottom of the flattened bag.

[0049.] Figure 33 is a bottom plan view of the bag of Figure 32, but showing the bottom gusset having excess material expanded to form a retaining space for a basket, the bottom conforming to contours and the overall shape of the lower end of the basket.

[0050.] Figure 34 is a perspective view of yet another alternative bag formed from a sleeve, showing the bag in a partially flattened position, the bag having a plurality of side

gussets having an excess of material, but no bottom gusset, the bag formed from a pleated material.

[0051.] Figure 35 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 34, showing the bag in a partially opened position, the bag having a plurality of side gussets having an excess of material expanding outward to both accept a basket and form a retaining space for a basket.

[0052.] Figure 36 is a perspective view of the bag of Figures 34-35, showing the bag in a position where the bag was opened and a basket was disposed therein, the bag retaining the basket in the retaining space, the bag being closed about and over the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket contained therein.

[0053.] Figure 37 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 7, but showing a plurality of bonding material spots disposed near the opening in the bag, near the upper end.

[0054.] Figure 38 is a section view defined by the circled area in Figure 37, showing the plurality of bonding material spots disposed near the opening in the bag.

[0055.] Figure 39 is a section view of Figure 38, but showing a plurality of bonding material spots connected together to form one loop of material.

[0056.] Figure 40 is a section view of Figure 39, but showing a plurality of bonding material spots connected together to form two loops of material.

[0057.] Figure 41 is an upper plan view of the bag of Figure 37, but showing the bag holding a basket therein, the upper end of the bag formed into a multi-loop bow.

[0058.] Figure 42 is a side elevational view of the bag of Figure 41, showing the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket container therein, and having a multi-loop bow which forms the closure of the bag.

[0059.] Figure 43 is a perspective view of yet another alternative bag formed from a sleeve, showing the bag in a partially flattened position, the bag having an excess of material thereabout in the form of a plurality of pleats, but no side gusset or bottom gusset, the bag formed from a pleated material.

[0060.] Figure 44 is a perspective view of the bag of Figure 43, showing the bag in a partially opened position, the bag having a plurality of pleats expanding outward to both accept a basket and form a retaining space for a basket.

[0061.] Figure 45 is a perspective view of the bag of Figures 43-44, showing the bag in a position where the bag was opened and a basket was disposed therein, the bag retaining the basket in the retaining space, the bag being closed about and over the handle of the basket, the bag conforming to the contours of the outer surface of the basket contained therein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0062.] The Embodiments and Methods of Figures 1-16

[0063.] Referring to Figures 1-16, designated generally by the reference numeral 10 is a basket bag which is constructed in accordance with the present invention. The basket bag 10 comprises a bag 12 which comprises at least one sheet of material.

[0064.] Such a bag 12, and all embodiments of bags shown and/or described herein, may be formed from a continuous web, may be formed from one sheet of material, may be formed from two sheets of material, or may be formed from a plurality of sheets of material. In the present embodiment, however, as shown in Figures 1-2, by example, but not by way of limitation, the bag 12 is formed from a first sheet of material 14 and a second sheet of material 16. The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each, respectively, have an upper surface 18 and 20, a lower surface 22 and 24, and an outer periphery 26 and 28. The outer periphery 26 and 28 of the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 forms, respectively, a first side 30 and 32, a second side 34 and 36, a third side 38 and 40 and a fourth side 42 and 44.

[0065.] The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 are placed in alignment and connected together by any means and method described herein, or known in the art, to form the bag 12. That is, for example, but not by way of limitation, the first sides 30 and 32, respectively, are aligned and connected together. Similarly, the second sides 34 and 36, respectively, are aligned and connected together.

[0066.] The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 form a somewhat cylindrical or somewhat square shape of the bag 12 (such general shapes formed when the gusset or gussets are folded inward), which has a first end 46 and a second end 48, an outer surface 50 and an inner surface 54 as illustrated in Figure 3. An opening 52 intersects the first end 46 and extends down and through the second end 48. The second end 48 is provided with a plurality of slits 56 (only one of the plurality of slits indicated by numeral 56). The plurality of slits 56 create a first flap 58, a second flap 60, a third flap 62

and a fourth flap 64, as shown in Figure 4. Opposing flaps, such as the first flap 58 and the second flap 60 are brought together and secured via a bonding material, or by any means and/or method shown and/or described herein, or known in the art (Figure 5). Similarly, opposing flaps, such as the third flap 62 and the fourth flap 64 are brought together and secured by any means or method described above. The plurality of flaps 58, 60, 62 and 64 forms a closure of the second end 48 of the bag 12, thereby forming a bottom 66 of the bag 12, and a retaining space (Figure 6).

[0067.] The bag 12, and all embodiments of bags shown and/or described herein, after being formed, remain flattened when not opened to contain a basket. Therefore, it will be appreciated that the first sheet of material 14 and the second sheet of material 16 forming the bag 12 are disposed adjacent each other while the bag is in a flattened state, as illustrated in Figures 8-10. A plurality of side gussets 70 are formed (only one side gusset designated by the numeral 70), which permit the bag 12 to flatten and remain in a flattened state. The bottom 66 of the bag 12 may also have at least one gusset 72. Alternatively, however, the bottom 66 of the bag 12 may have no gussets (not shown). In a further alternative, if the bottom 66 of the bag 12 does have at least one gusset 72, the bag 12 may be formed without any side gusset 70 (not shown).

[0068.] To use the bag 12, and all bags shown and/or described herein, the bag 12 must be opened and held open to permit the bag 12 to form the retaining space 68 for a basket, and to permit a basket to be inserted into the retaining space 68, as shown in Figures 7 and 12.

[0069.] A bonding material 74 may, optionally, be disposed on the first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16, on either the upper surface 18 (Figure 1), the lower surface 22, or both surfaces, before the bag 12 is formed, and may be utilized to connect the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 together to form the bag 12. A bonding material 74 is often also disposed on the bag 12 after formation, as illustrated in Figures 7 and 12. In this instance, the bag 12 may have a bonding material 74 disposed on the outer surface 50, or, alternatively, the inner surface 54, or, in a further alternative, both surfaces. The sheets of material 14 and 16, and the bag 12, may, however, be free of a bonding material 74. In addition, bonding material may be disposed on at least a portion of a basket as well (not shown). As illustrated in Figures 7 and 12-13, the bonding material 74 is often disposed on the inner surface 54 of the bag 12, near the opening 52.

[0070.] It will be appreciated that the bonding material 74 may also be disposed in a strip of bonding material 74, although the bonding material 74 also could be applied in the form of spaced apart spots or the bonding material 74 may be disposed on one or more surfaces of the sheets of material 14 and 16, respectively, or the bag 12, in any geometric shape, non-geometric and/or asymmetric shape, or any combination thereof, including any pattern or plurality of patterns. Further, the bonding material 74 may form at least a part, or, alternatively, all of the pattern on each of the sheets of material 14 and 16, or the bag 12. In this instance, the bonding material 74 may comprise one or more colors; the bonding material 74 may comprise one or more decorative patterns as well. One such bonding material is described in U.S. Patent No. 5,347,789, entitled, "Decorative Material Having A Colored Sticky Element Disposed Thereon Forming At Least A Portion Of A

Decoration And Method", issued to Donald E. Weder, on September 20, 1994 and which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

[0071.] Turning to the characteristics of the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16, the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each have a thickness in a range from about 0.1 mils to about 30 mils. Often, the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each have a thickness in a range from about 0.5 mils to about 10 mils. In some embodiments, the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each have a thickness in a range from about 1.0 mils to about 8.0 mils. In other embodiments, the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each have a thickness in a range from about 1.0 mils to about 5.0 mils. The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 are each constructed of a material which is at least somewhat flexible.

[0072.] The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 may comprise any shape or combination of shapes. The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 for example may be square, circular or any other geometric, non-geometric, asymmetric or fanciful shape, such as heart shaped, for example only, or any combination of geometric and non-geometric shapes. The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may be constructed of a single layer of material or a plurality of layers of the same or different types of materials. The layers of material comprising the first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may be laminated together or connected together by any method known in the art.

[0073.] In one embodiment, the first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16, respectively, is a relatively thin, flexible material constructed from a plastic film.

Alternatively, a paper may be utilized, alone, or in combination with other sheets of material described herein. One such plastic film (Hercules B523 oriented polypropylene packaging film (clear)), is available from Hercules Incorporated, Hercules Plaza, Wilmington, DE 19894. Such sheets of material may be laminated together or may be connected together by any method known in the art, or may remain partially or completely unconnected.

[0074.] The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 shown in Figures 1-2 are constructed from any suitable material that is capable of having the characteristics and function described herein. The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may be comprised of paper (the term "paper" as used herein means treated or untreated paper, corrugated paper or cardboard or any other form of paper material). The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may comprise cellophane, foil, plastic film, metallized film, fabric (woven or nonwoven or synthetic or natural), fiber, burlap, or any combination thereof.

[0075.] The term "plastic film" as used herein means a thermo-plastic resinous material, such as, but not by way of limitation, a man-made polymer such as, but not by way of limitation, a polypropylene. The term "plastic film" as used herein also means a naturally occurring polymer such as cellophane. A plastic film, as contemplated and described in detail herein, is relatively strong and not as subject to tearing (substantially non-tearable), as might be the case with paper or foil.

[0076.] The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each have a length 76 and 78, respectively, extending between the first sides 30 and 32 and second sides 34 and 36 of the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16. The first and second sheets of

material 14 and 16 each also have a width 80 and 82, respectively, extending between the third sides 38 and 40 and the fourth sides 42 and 44 of the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16.

[0077.] The first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 each may be constructed of a single layer of material or a plurality of layers of the same or different types of materials. One or more sheets of material may be laminated or bonded together, completely or partially, by any method known in the art. When multiple sheets of material are used, the sheets of material need not be uniform in size or shape. That is, one sheet may extend beyond at least a portion of the outer periphery of another sheet of material.

[0078.] As noted earlier, a bonding material 74 may be disposed on either the first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16, or, alternatively, on the bag 12, in any pattern or shape. One method for disposing a bonding material, in this case an adhesive, on a sheet of material is described in U.S. Patent No. 5,111,637 entitled "Method For Wrapping A Floral Grouping" issued to Weder et al., on May 12, 1992 and which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. Another method for disposing a bonding material in order to laminate two sheets of material is described in U.S. Patent No. 4,297,811 entitled "Laminated Printed Foil Flower Pot Wrap With Multicolor Appearance, issued to Weder on November 3, 1981, which is also hereby incorporated herein by reference.

[0079.] The term "bonding material" when used herein means an adhesive, possibly a pressure sensitive adhesive, or a cohesive. Where the bonding material is a cohesive, a similar cohesive material must be placed on the adjacent surface for bondingly contacting and bondingly engaging with the cohesive material. The term "bonding material" also

includes materials which are heat sealable and, in this instance, the adjacent portions of the material must be brought into contact and then heat must be applied to effect the seal. The term "bonding material" when used herein also means a lacquer, which may be applied to the sheet of material and, in this instance, heat, sound waves, or vibrations, also must be applied to effect the sealing of the lacquer.

[0080.] The term "bonding material" when used herein also means any type of material or thing which can be used to effect the bonding or connecting of the two adjacent portions of the material or sheet of material to effect the connection or bonding described herein. The term "bonding material" also includes ties, labels, bands, ribbons, strings, tape, staples or combinations thereof. Some of the bonding materials would secure the ends of the sheet of material while other bonding material may bind the circumference of the bag. Another way to secure the wrapping is to heat seal a portion of the material to another portion of the material. One way to do this is to contact the ends with an iron of sufficient heat to heat seal the material.

[0081.] The term "bonding material" when used herein also means any heat or chemically shrinkable material, and static electrical or other electrical means, magnetic means, mechanical or barb-type fastening means or clamps, cling-type characteristics of polyethylene or curl-type characteristics of the film or materials incorporated in the sheet of material which can cause the material to take on certain shapes, and any type of welding method which may weld portions of the sheet to itself or to a basket, or to both the sheet itself and a basket.

[0082.] The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may consist of designs or decorative patterns which are printed, etched, and/or embossed thereon using inks or other printing materials. An example of an ink which may be applied to either surface of a sheet of material is described in U.S. Patent No. 5,147,706 entitled "Water Based Ink On Foil And/Or Synthetic Organic Polymer" issued to Kingman on Sep. 15, 1992 and which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. In addition, the first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may have various colorings, coatings, embossings, flockings and/or metallic finishes, or other decorative surface ornamentation applied separately or simultaneously. The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may be characterized totally or partially, but not by way of limitation, by pearlescent, translucent, transparent, iridescent, neon, holographic, or the like, qualities. Each of the above-named characteristics may occur alone or in combination with other characteristics described herein, and may be applied to the upper and/or lower surface of either the first sheet of material 14 or the second sheet of material 16. Moreover, each surface of each of the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 may vary in the combination of such characteristics. The first and/or second sheets of material 14 and 16 may also be partially or completely opaque, translucent, clear and/or tinted transparent.

[0083.] To use the bag 12 after formation, the bag is unflattened and held in an opened position to receive a basket 84. The bag 12 in the opened position forms the retaining space 68. A basket 84 is inserted into the retaining space 68 of the bag 12, as shown in Figures 12-13. Such a basket 84, as illustrated in Figure 11, has an upper end 86, a lower end 88 and an outer surface 90. The upper end 86 is intersected by an

opening 92 which forms an inner surface 94 and a basket retaining space 96. The basket 84 may also have a handle 98, or a plurality of handles (not shown), which connect to the basket 84. Alternatively, the basket 84 may have no handle (not shown).

[0084.] The basket 84 may be formed from fiber, including natural fibers as well as synthetic fibers, cloth, plastic, metal, paper, wood, glass, pottery, clay, paper mache, burlap, and any combination thereof. In addition, a basket 84 formed from any material may be utilized as long as the basket performs as described herein.

[0085.] In a method of use, as shown in Figures 11-13, the bag 12 and a basket 84 are provided, and is unflattened, and the opening 52 in the first end 46 is opened and held in an opened position. The bottom gusset 72 is expanded when the bag 12 is in an opened position, and any bottom gusset 72 is extended such that the bottom 66 of the bag 12 is flattened against the surface upon which it rests. The opening of the bag causes the bottom gusset 72 and the plurality of side gussets 70 to expand to form the retaining space 68; similarly, when the bag 12 has only a bottom gusset 72, the bottom gusset 72 must be expanded, to form the retaining space 68. A basket 84 is inserted into the opening 52 and is disposed in the retaining space 68 of the bag 12. When the basket 84 is disposed in the retaining space 68 and rests upon the bottom 66, the plurality of side gussets 70 are extended outward, in contrast to their inward folded position when the bag 12 is flattened, and in contrast to their position before the basket 84 is inserted, in which the plurality of side gussets 70 form generally level, unfolded, or, only slightly folded, sides of the bag 12. The plurality of side gussets 70 in the expanded position and/or the bottom gusset 72 in the expanded position permit the bag 12 to conform to the overall shape of the outer

surface 90 of the basket 84. The plurality of side gussets 70 and/or bottom gusset 72 permit the bag 12 to conform to the contours and overall shape of the outer surface 90 of the basket by expanding and contracting, thereby permitting the bag 12 to follow the contours of the basket 84 and to conform to the contours of the outer surface 90 of the basket 84. When the bag 12 has only a bottom gusset 72, it will be understood that the bottom gusset 72 permits the bag 12 to conform to the contours of the outer surface 90 of the lower end 88 and a substantial portion of the basket 84.

[0086.] In a method of closure, the first end 46 of the bag 12 may be gathered together, above the level of the basket 84 and the handle 98, as shown in Figure 14. The first end 46 of the bag 12 may be crimped together to provide a closure of the bag 12 about the basket 84 (Figure 14). This closure may be assisted or created by a bonding material 74 disposed about or near the first end 46 of the bag 12. It will be appreciated that the first end 46 of the bag 12 may be both crimped and twisted to create such a closure as well (not shown).

[0087.] Alternatively, the first end 46 of the bag 12 is flattened against itself and the first end 46 is folded over to create a closure, as illustrated in Figure 15. The bag 12 is held in the closed position by bonding material 74, or any other means or method known in the art. In addition, in another similar alternative, the first end 46 is again flattened and folded over, but is folded adjacent the handle 98 of the basket 84, and is held in the closed position via a bonding material 74, as shown in Figure 16. Such a closure near the handle 98 of the basket 84 permits an operator to pick up the basket 84 in the bag 12 by grasping

the basket 84 from the outside of the bag 12 by the handle 98, using the thumb and fingers to hold the handle 98 of the basket 84 from the outside of the closed bag 12.

[0088.] The Embodiments and Methods of Figures 17-28

[0089.] Shown in Figures 17-28 is a bag 12a constructed from a first sheet of material 14a and a second sheet of material 16a, which is exactly like the bag 12 and formed from first and second sheets of material 14 and 16, respectively, except that the first and second sheets of material 14a and 16a have a different shape, and therefore the bag 12a has a different shape.

[0090.] As shown in Figures 17-28, the first and second sheets of material 14a and 16a have third sides 38a and 40a and fourth sides 42a and 44a which each have an outside angle of about, but not by way of limitation, 225 degrees. When the first and second sheets of material 14a and 16a are connected together (Figure 19), the second end 48a has a generally trapezoidal shape, while the first end 46a does not. The first and second sheets of material may have, as noted above, a plurality of slits 56a formed in the first and second sheets of material 14a and 16a before they are connected together, or such plurality of slits 56a may be formed when the first and second sheets of material 14a and 16a are connected. As illustrated in Figure 20, a first flap 58a, a second flap 60a, a third flap 62a and a fourth flap 64a are formed, and are folded over and connected in a manner similar to that described above for the first flap 58 and second flap 60, the third flap 62 and the fourth flap 64 (Figures 21-22) except that the resulting bottom 66a of the bag 12a formed from this closure is often, but not by way of limitation, a diamond, or, alternatively, oval shape (Figure 22). The bag 12a may have a plurality of side gussets 70a

(Figure 23), or, alternatively, the bag 12a may have no side gussets (Figure 24). Similarly, the bottom 66a may have a bottom gusset 72a (Figure 24), or be formed without such a bottom gusset (Figure 25). In a method of use, the bag 12a (Figure 26) is unflattened and opened via the opening 52a and held in the opened position, in a manner illustrated previously in Figures 7, 12 and 13. A basket 84a is inserted into the opening 52a and disposed in the retaining space 68a, in a manner similar to that described previously. Any bottom gusset 72a or plurality of side gussets 70a are expanded when the basket 84a is inserted into the retaining space 68a of the bag 12a (Figures 27-28).

[0091.] A portion of the plurality of side gussets 70a may be retained upon closing the bag 12a, as shown in Figures 27-28, when the first end 46a of the bag 12a is folded over and closed, or sealed, in any manner or method shown and/or described herein.

[0092.] Alternatively, the first end 46a of the bag 12a may be crimped and/or twisted (not shown) to obtain a closure, as shown (Figure 14) and described previously herein. A bonding material 74, or any other means or method of closure known in the art, may be utilized to obtain closure of the bag 12a. The bag 12a, when closed conforms to the contours and overall shape of the outer surface 90a of the basket 84a disposed therein.

[0093.] The Embodiments and Methods of Figures 29-33

[0094.] Shown in Figures 29-33 is a bag 12b constructed from a first sheet of material 14b and a second sheet of material 16b, which is similar to the bag 12 and 12a formed from first and second sheets of material 14 and 16, and 14a and 16a, respectively,

except that the bag 12b has a plurality of side gussets 70b having pleating or gathering of the material forming the plurality of side gussets 70b.

[0095.] The first and second sheets of material 14b and 16b are connected together in a manner identical to that shown and described above for the first and second sheets of material 14 and 16 (Figures 29-30). Such a connection resembles sleeves. Such sleeves are disclosed in both U.S. Patent No. 5,572,851, entitled "Plant Package Having A Detachable Sleeve And Methods", issued to Weder, November 12, 1996, and U.S. Patent No. 5,625,979, entitled "Sleeve Having A Detachable Portion Forming A Skirt And Methods", issued to Weder, May 6, 1997, which are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

[0096.] The first sheet of material 14b and the second sheet of material 16b lay flatwise upon each other, with the lower surface 22b of the first sheet of material 14b adjacent the upper surface 20b of the second sheet of material 16b (Figure 29). Between the first sides 30b and 32b, respectively, as shown in Figure 29 is a first gusset 100 whereby the first gusset 100 has an excess of material, in the present instance, the first gusset 100 comprises a pleated material comprising a Z-shaped pleat, referred to herein as an "accordion pleat". It will be appreciated, however, that other pleated patterns, such as, but not by way of limitation, vertical pleats, vertical folds, and other patterns of permitting excess material to expand and contract, may be utilized in the present invention. The first gusset 100 has an outer surface 102, an inner surface 104 and an outer periphery 106. It will be understood that the first gusset 100, and all gussets described herein, may take any form. The first gusset 100 also has a length 108 which, in this instance, extends

from the first end 46b of the bag 12b to the second end 48b of the bag 12b. The outer periphery 106 of the first gusset 100 connects the first sides 30b and 32b, respectively, of the first and second sheets of material 14b and 16b.

[0097.] Between the second sides 34b and 36b, respectively, as shown in Figure 29 is a second gusset 110 whereby the second gusset 110 has an excess of material, identical to that described previously for the first gusset 100. The second gusset 110 has an outer surface 112, an inner surface 114 and an outer periphery 116. The second gusset 110 also has a length 118 which, in this instance, extends from the first end 46b of the bag 12b to the second end 48b of the bag 12b. The outer periphery 116 of the second gusset 110 connects the second sides 34b and 36b, respectively, of the first and second sheets of material 14b and 16b. It will be appreciated that both first and second gussets 100 and 110, respectively, assist in forming the bag 12b and exist as part of the bag 12b. The first and second gussets 100 and 110, respectively, are termed, collectively, a plurality of gussets 70b, and it will be appreciated that one gusset, or, alternatively, any number of gussets may be utilized to form the bag 12b so long as the bag functions as described herein.

[0098.] In this instance, however, a plurality of side gussets 70b are formed, each of which has an excess of material. As noted above, but by way of example only, the material forming the plurality of side gussets 70b is pleated in a Z-shaped accordion pleat. All gussets shown herein may be constructed from a separate material, or may be constructed from the same material used to form the first and/or second sheets of material 14b and 16b. An example of how a gusset may be formed from a separate sheet of material that

the material used to form the first and/or second sheets of material 14b and 16b, respectively, is shown in U.S. Patent No. 3,380,646, issued to Doyen in Figures 9 and 10 and discussion thereof, which is hereby incorporated by reference herein.

[0099.] A closed bottom 66b of the bag 12b is formed by sealing the second end 48b of the bag 12b via a bonding material 74b or via any means and/or method known in the art. It will be understood, however, that when the second end 48b of the bag 12b has one or more gussets, the one or more gussets may share any and/or all of the characteristics of the gussets described herein. Further, it will be understood that any bottom gusset connects to the first sheet of material 14b and the second sheet of material 16b to form both a gusset and a closure, to form a closed bottom 66b of the bag 12b.

[0100.] In a method of use, when the bag 12b is unflattened and opened via the opening 52b, the plurality of side gussets 70b expand outward, due to the excess of material and the pleating, permitting the bag to be widely opened for the insertion of a basket 84b, as shown in Figures 30-31. When the basket 84b is inserted, it will be appreciated that the pleated material contained within the plurality of side gussets 70b expands outward to accommodate the size of the basket 84b (Figure 31), and in a reverse manner, the pleated material contracts and tucks inwardly as well to shape the bag 12b about the handle 98b, to create a bag 12b which contours to the shape of the basket 84b. The bag 12b is closed and/or sealed via any means and/or method shown and/or described herein, or known in the art.

[0101.] It will be understood that the bottom 66b of the bag 12b may, optionally, as shown in Figures 32-33, be formed such that an excess of material which is gathered or

pleated is provided, to form a bottom gusset 72b. It will be appreciated that when the bottom 66b of the bag 12b is not expanded, the bottom gusset is flattened, as shown in Figure 32. When the bottom gusset 72b is expanded, such as when the bag 12b is opened and a basket 84b is contained therein, the bottom gusset 72b expands to conform to the contours and the overall shape of the outer surface 90b of the lower end 88b of the basket 84b (Figure 33).

[0102.] The Embodiments and Methods of Figures 34-36

[0103.] Shown in Figures 34-36 is a bag 12c constructed from a first sheet of material 14c and a second sheet of material 16c, which is exactly like the bag 12b and formed from first and second sheets of material 14b and 16b, respectively, except that the first and second sheets of material 14c and 16c have an excess of material and, for instance, but not by way of limitation, are completely pleated in a manner such as, but not by way of limitation, a Z-shaped accordion pleating, creating a bag 12c having an outer surface 90c and an inner surface 94c which has pleating thereabout.

[0104.] The bag 12c has a first gusset 100c and a second gusset 110c forming a plurality of side gussets 70c having pleating or gathering of the material forming the plurality of side gussets 70c, as described above for the plurality of gussets 70b. The bag 12c is formed in a manner identical to that described above for bag 12b.

[0105.] In a method of use, when the bag 12c is unflattened and opened via the opening 52c, as illustrated in Figure 35, the pleated excess material, along with the plurality of side gussets 70c expand outward, due to the excess of material and the pleating,

permitting the bag 12c to be widely opened for the insertion of a basket 84c. When the basket 84c is inserted, as shown in Figure 36, it will be appreciated that the pleated material contained within the plurality of side gussets 70c and the outer surface 90c expands outward to accommodate the size of the basket 84c, and in a reverse manner, the pleated material contracts and tucks inwardly as well to shape the bag 12c about the handle 98c, to create a bag 12c that conforms to the contours of the overall shape of the outer surface 90c of the basket 84c. The bag 12c is closed and/or sealed via any means and/or method shown and/or described herein, or known in the art. The bag 12c may also have a bottom gusset (not shown) which is similar or identical to those bottom gussets described above.

[0106.] In yet another alternative (not shown), the outer surface 90c of the bag 12c has pleating, but the plurality of side gussets 70c and/or the bottom gusset 72c has no pleating, or, alternatively, no excess of material.

[0107.] The Embodiments and Methods of Figures 37-42

[0108.] In another alternative, as shown in Figures 37-42, a bonding material 74d may be disposed in spots of bonding material 120 about the upper portion of a bag 12d such that, when the spots of bonding material 120 are connected together, the first end 46d of the bag 12d forms a multi-loop bow 122 (Figure 41).

[0109.] It will be appreciated that the bag 12d may be identical to any bag shown and/or described herein may be used, but for illustration purposes, the bag 12 (shown previously in Figures 7 and 12-16) will be utilized. A plurality of bonding material spots 120

are disposed about the opening 52d of the bag 12d, near the first end 46d (Figure 37). The plurality of bonding material spots 120 are arranged such that the bonding material spots 120 cooperate to provide both a multi-loop bow 122 at the first end 46d of the bag 12d and/or a closure of the bag 12d about a basket 84d. It will be understood that the plurality of bonding material spots 120 disposed on the bag 12d provide one schematic illustration and example of forming a combined closure and multi-loop bow 122. It will also be appreciated that the plurality of bonding material spots 120 may be arranged in a different manner, and still form a multi-loop bow 122 and/or closure.

[0110.] The bag 12d shown in Figure 37 and described in detail previously herein has a plurality of oval-shaped bonding material spots 120, which are positioned in a generally symmetrical manner on the inner surface 54d of the bag 12d, near the opening 52d and the first end 46d. It will be understood that, in most instance, before the multi-loop bow 122 is formed, the bag 12d will have been unflattened and opened and held open for the insertion of the basket 84d therein. Figures 38-40 show a sectional view of a portion of the bag 12d, the sectional view taken from the area encircled in Figure 37. Figure 39 shows, in part, the beginning of the formation of the multi-loop bow 122, showing one of the plurality of loops 124 being formed. Figure 40 shows two of the plurality of loops. It will be appreciated that this process is repeated, until each of the plurality of bonding material spots 120 have been utilized, and the plurality of loops 124 form the multi-loop bow 122 as shown in Figures 41-42.

[0111.] More specifically, as illustrated in Figure 39, one-half for a bonding material spot 120 is bonded to one-half of another bonding material spot 120' to form one of the

plurality of loops 124 (only one of the plurality of loops being designated by the numeral 124) which form the multi-loop bow 122. As illustrated in Figure 40, one-half of the bonding material spot 120' is then bonded to one-half of bonding material spot 120" to form yet another of the plurality of loops 124. This process is continued, as described above, until all of the plurality of loops 124 form a multi-loop bow 122, as shown in Figures 41-42. It will be appreciated that disposing different numbers of the bonding material spots 120 on the bag 12d, and/or differing the arrangement of the plurality of bonding material spots 120 on the bag 12d, will create multi-loop bows having differing numbers and/or sizes of loops 124.

[0112.] It will also be understood that the multi-loop bow 122 may create a closure at locations other than the top of the bag 12d. For instance, but not by way of limitation, if the bag 12d was placed on its side, and a basket 84d was disposed in the bag 12d in an upright position, then a multi-loop bow 122 would be positioned between the upper end 86d and the lower end 88d of the basket 84d adjacent the outer surface 90d of the basket 84d, and not necessarily near the handle 98d or the upper end 86d of the basket 84d (not shown).

[0113.] The Embodiments and Methods of Figures 43-45

[0114.] Shown in Figures 43-45 is a bag 12e constructed from a first sheet of material 14e and a second sheet of material 16e, which is exactly like the bag 12c and formed from first and second sheets of material 14c and 16c, respectively, except that the first and second sheets of material 14e and 16e have an excess of material and, for

instance, but not by way of limitation, are completely pleated in a manner such as, but not by way of limitation, a Z-shaped accordion pleating, creating a bag 12e having an outer surface 50e and an inner surface 54e which has pleating thereabout.

[0115.] The bag 12e in this instance is not like the bag 12c because the present bag 12e has no plurality of side gussets. The bag 12e is formed in a manner identical to that described above for bag 12b except for the lack of side gussets; the bag 12e has no bottom gussets, either.

[0116.] In a method of use, when the bag 12e is unflattened and opened via the opening 52e, as shown in Figure 44, the pleated excess material expands outward, permitting the bag 12e to be widely opened for the insertion of a basket 84e. When the basket 84e is inserted, it will be appreciated that the pleated material expands outward to accommodate the size of the basket 84e, and in a reverse manner, the pleated material contracts and tucks inwardly as well to shape the bag 12e about the handle 98e, to create a bag 12e which follows the overall shape and contours of the outer surface 90e of the basket 84e. The bag 12e is closed and/or sealed via any means and/or method shown and/or described herein, or known in the art.

[0117.] It will be appreciated that the different variations of gussets disclosed herein may be utilized, alone or in combination, with any of the bags disclosed herein. Similarly, it will be understood that any of the means and methods of providing a closure disclosed herein may be used with any of the bags shown and/or described herein.

[0118.] Changes may be made in the embodiments of the invention described herein, or in parts or elements of the embodiments described herein, or in the sequence of steps of the methods described herein, without departing from the spirit and/or scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.